Army Corps of Engineers
Civil Works Environmental Programs Continue to Grow

Since passage of the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969 and adoption of the Army's Environmental Strategy, environmental protection and stewardship have been important components of the civil works planning process. Legislation passed in 1990 established environmental protection as one of the primary missions of water resources projects-- along with navigation and flood control. During the last 10 years, ecosystem restoration projects have grown increasingly popular throughout the country. This new direction has allowed us to expand our traditional environmental activities and enhance or restore natural resources at our projects.

In April, 2001, the Chief of Engineers challenged the Corps senior leadership to formalize and commit to writing Environmental Operating Principles that had evolved informally over time. These principles are broad enough to apply to all of our activities, and yet concrete enough to guide our environmental responsibilities meaningfully into the future. The Chief of Engineers will introduce them to the public on March 26 at the dedication of the Davis Pond freshwater diversion project in Louisiana.

Funding for the Corps of Engineers' study and project specific Civil Works Environmental Program has been on the rise over the past several years, as the table below reflects:

ENVIRONMENTAL BUSINESS FUNDING ($ M)

CATEGORY	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03
PRESIDENT'S BUDGET	324	350	422	596	549	595	624

The Corps' environmental work makes up 20 percent of our overall Civil Works program and is increasing - of 308 recon studies for potential new projects completed from FY98 to FY01, 111 (36%) were environmental. Of over 130 potential new study starts identified for the future, almost 50% are environmental.

We have a number of significant environmental restoration activities under way. Principal among them are restoration of the Everglades and South Florida ecosystem, our efforts to restore the Louisiana Coastal Area ecosystem, and the Tres Rios, Arizona project. These are but only a few examples:

Everglades and the South Florida Ecosystem. One of the country's most significant environmental initiatives is restoring the Everglades and the South Florida ecosystem. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, approved

by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, provides a framework for restoring this ecosystem and providing for other water-related needs of the region. Restoring the ecosystem in South Florida is a complex task, requiring coordination among 16 county governments, more than 130 municipalities, two tribal governments, numerous special interests, six Metropolitan Planning Organizations, five Regional Planning Councils, the South Florida Water Management District, five major State environmental and planning agencies, and eight Federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The ultimate success of efforts to restore the South Florida ecosystem will hinge on the ability of these governments and groups to work together in an unprecedented level of partnership. More information on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan may be obtained at http://www.evergladesplan.org..

Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration. This monumental effort seeks to restore and protect Louisiana's coastal wetlands that are being lost at a rate of 25 to 35 square miles per year. These wetlands provide extremely valuable commercial, recreational, cultural, biological, and physical benefits. Their loss threatens not only enormous ecological productivity, but also a $1 billion annual Gulf of Mexico seafood industry; the city of New Orleans and many other urban, industrial, and agricultural areas that rely on the wetlands as natural protection from hurricanes and storm damage; winter habitat for 70 percent of the Nation's waterfowl; a $9 billion a year oil and gas industry; and the Nation's largest port complex, which passes about 16 percent of our waterborne commerce. A $35 million feasibility study will examine a variety of major actions during a 10-year period, ranging from barrier island protection to the reintroduction of inflows and sediment needed to replenish wetlands. The recommended work may cost $15 billion. More information on the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration may be obtained at http://www.coast2050.gov/

Tres Rios, Arizona. The Tres Rios project provides for ecosystem restoration of the Salt River, west of Phoenix, including that river's confluence areas with the Gila and Agua Fria Rivers. The primary ecosystem problems in the area include the loss of habitat and associated riverside vegetation. To restore the ecosystem in this 8-mile reach of the Salt River, the Tres Rios project includes water supply and infrastructure features to convey flow from a waste water treatment plant and water distribution system to reestablish and support about 775 acres of native vegetation and wildlife habitat along the Salt River. In association with the environmental restoration element of the project, a recreation plan consisting of approximately 11 miles of multi-use non-motorized trails, parking lots with kiosks, and other amenities for viewing, picnicking, and exploring the area by foot, bicycle, or horseback is also included. More information on the Tres Rios may be obtained at http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/pd/az/tresrios.html